

Chapter 139 - Mana Child

The Guide didn't give him any time to prepare. As Kai made his decision, the glowing mana veins throughout his body began to flow faster. The sparse ambient essence inside the bedroom streamed into his body on its own.

What...?

Kai observed the whole phenomenon in wonder. No book had described the process in detail. Somehow he had thought the Guide would just 'poof' his profession and make it appear like it did with skills.

A foreign presence was guiding his own mana, a myriad of colorful motes whirled inside of him. It should have filled him with some amount of worry, and yet Kai was as relaxed as a sunbathing lizard.

I feel like I should panic a little, right? This is so damn weird.

The concentration of mana grew far beyond what his body could contain but there was no discomfort. Peaking at an invisible threshold, the streams of glowing motes stopped, and the action began.

Thousands of threads twisted and expanded, weaving a second mana network around his own, integrating seamlessly with his veins. A warm tingling pervaded his body, not exactly pleasant, but not painful either. Compared to when he advanced his race grade, this was akin to receiving a professional massage.

Through the veneer of tranquility, his curiosity peeked out, daring him to reassert control over his essence. He had never witnessed mana behaving like this. Was this the Guide taking over? How would it react if he tried to...?

Curiosity killed the cat. Don't be an idiot.

Poking the Guide while it rebuilt his mana network was very dumb. Kai blamed the strange calmness that had taken over, the awareness that nothing could go wrong. It was probably a measure to help the process go smoothly.

Before he could mull over his state of being any longer, the filaments of mana completed the process. A twin intricate network of swirling channels overlapped his familiar mana veins, linked but distinct.

As waves of excitement crashed upon his calm, the process was done. The familiar glowing pathways formed a new maze. He'd need weeks, maybe months, to learn all the new bends and twirls. The concentration of mana inside his body was still noticeably higher, clouding the finer details.

Kai didn't get a second to take a closer look when notifications filled his vision. Anything else could wait for later.

Ding

You've gained the profession: Mana Child.

Ding

Profession skill learned! Gifted Novice (lv1) – When passion meets diligence, true talent is born. A Mana Child is naturally gifted at developing his knowledge and skills of the arcane.

Ding

Profession skill learned! **Mana Echo (lv1)** – Create an echo of a mana construct or casting you’ve observed to reproduce it at will. The quality and quantity of the copies is determined by the level of the skill.

Ding

Boon granted! **Mana Spring**: Grants improved body capacity to hold and shape the Essence of the World.

Ding

New Feat: Precocious Child: For breaking the Second Seal more than two years ahead of time and selecting a profession, you are awarded: +2 Favor!

Kai’s jaw hung half-opened. One thing was hearing about how the profession worked, another was reaping the benefits himself. The feat was just the cherry on top.

It can’t be a bad choice if the Guide rewarded him, can it?

Any remaining qualms about his decision were wiped from his mind like mist by a rising sun. Soon it would be twelve years since he opened his eyes on Elydes. From the day he had learned Meditation, he had never stopped wondering when he would get a profession.

The day is finally here.

Kai summoned his status to ensure he wasn’t dreaming.

- Name: **Kai Tylenn**
- Race: **Human** ★★★ – 16,789 > 17,514 / 300,000 XP
- Profession: **Mana Child lv 0** – 0 / 5,000 XP

Body stats

- Strength: **20**
- Dexterity: **23**
- Constitution: **25**
- Mind: **28**
- Spirit: **32**
- Perception: **22**
- Favor: **32>34**

Boon:

- **Mana Spring**

Profession Skills:

- **Gifted Novice (lv1)**
- **Mana Echo (lv1)**

General Skills:

- **Mana Sense (lv76)**
- **Mana Manipulation (lv64)**
- **Empower (lv64)**
- **Inspect (lv53)**
- **Blessed Swimmer (lv44)**
- **Water Magic (lv44)**
- **Alchemy (lv44)**
- **Runes (lv40)**
- **Nature Magic (lv38)**
- **Swordsmanship – Advanced (lv24)**
- **Herbology – Advanced (lv34)**
- **Attuned Meditation (lv14>15)**
- **Improvisation (lv8>9)**

- **Hallowed Intuition (lv4)**

It was all there. The empty *Profession* slot with *None* had been a permanent fixture of his status for... well, always.

Not anymore.

Kai blinked and reread the line a dozen times. Mana Child didn't fade or disappear, it was real. Unfortunately, he didn't get any free attributes yet. He needed 5,000 XP for level one and 1,000 more for each level after that.

Not a small amount, but it was a grain of sand compared to the XP needed for advancing his race. With his race at the peak of orange grade, his profession would be easily pulled along through the first levels.

The boon also explained why his body housed more mana than usual. Kai was trying to estimate the extent of the boost when a knock woke him from his reverie.

"The door was open," Ele poked her head inside. "I was trying that mana exercise you told me when I felt something weird. Did something good happen? You're smiling enough to blind the sun."

Kai touched his face, he hadn't realized it was split by a toothy grin. He couldn't have known taking a profession would cause a disturbance in the ambient mana, and obviously, his sister noticed it as she diligently trained Mana Sense.

Ele's brows furrowed in concentration before her eyes widened in shock. "Did you really take a profession?" It sounded closer to a statement than a question.

I might have taught her how to use mana skills too well...

Too late for regrets, Kai pulled her inside and made sure to properly close the door behind her. The dampening enchantments would block any sound from reaching their mom's ears.

"I did." There was no point denying what she could plainly see, though this wasn't how he had planned the conversation to go.

Improvisation to the rescue once again.

"After the raid, I was offered the choice to break the Second Seal early, and I took it."

"Why— Ho— Did y—" Ele tried to speak three sentences at once. She closed her eyes. When she reopened them, her gaze nailed him to the floor.

Oh, boy. Here we go.

"Why did you do something so reckless without telling anybody? There is a reason why people wait till fourteen," her tone was mild, slightly curt. Anyone who didn't know her wouldn't think much of it. Kai knew his sister was borderline furious.

Improvisation and his innocent smile did him little good. He had told two people in fact and asked for advice from Reishi. Kai had enough awareness to shut his mouth. He didn't think telling her he did go to someone else would help.

Without interrupting her stare, Ele sat on his bed, patting the spot beside her. "Sit down."

Kai complied with a resigned air and readied himself for a long lecture. No doubt Alana would do the same, and Moui too if he got the chance.

Ele uttered a single word. "Why?"

“What do you mean?”

“Why did you do it?” Ele sighed. “You must have had a very good reason, *right?*”

“I—” It was his time to stumble over his words.

Where should I start from...

Kai looked at his sister, determined. “I considered all the possibilities and thought it would be the best decision. I’m so tired of feeling powerless.”

There were two dozen more reasons why that was the best option for him, but the moment he spoke, Kai knew that was what mattered above everything else. He felt like a boat lost in the storm, on the brink of sinking if the wind blew in the wrong direction.

How could he say no when a profession was offered to him? Especially when there were reasons that made it a viable option. He was tired of waiting.

Her scolding look softened as Ele hugged him. Taken aback, Kai sat rigidly.

I’m safe then?

Ele pulled back, keeping her hands on his shoulders. “Why didn’t you tell me or Mom before doing it?” The anger was gone, though a scolding tone remained.

“You and Mom would have told me not to do it no matter what I said.”

His whole family would have given him that same answer. He could already smell the self-flagellation on his sister. If he'd warned them and then done it anyway, they would feel responsible for his choice. As if every danger in the world was their personal failing. This way they couldn't blame his childish whims on themselves.

"That's not true..."

Kai raised an eyebrow. "*Really?*"

"I understand that you might not feel safe after what happened..." Her mana pulsed uneasily before she regained control. "But we're going to keep you safe. The Republic will ensure there are no more *accidents*, you have nothing to worry about."

And who's going to protect us from the Republic? Or the rebels when they decide to come back?

Kai could fill a book with all the things beyond their control. Most were highly unlikely, but not all. He had earned the right to be paranoid after getting kidnapped.

"Now it's done. It was my choice to take a profession." Kai attempted to dispel the dark cloud over his sister. "Don't worry, I've got something pretty decent. Even if I waited, it couldn't get better than that."

Ele looked skeptical at his boastful statement. "I'm quite sure that's not how it works."

"Really? Then I guess everybody gets two skills and one boon..."

As if a jolt passed through his sister, she sat straight up, any trace of gloom banished from her face. "What did you get, exactly?"

“You know... the usual stuff. I don’t want to bore you with the details.” Kai hid his smile behind an impassive look.

“Come on, I can see you want to tell me.”

“Do I? You didn’t sound very interested before...”

He continued to tease her with dismissing statements until Ele resorted to her secret weapon: tickling. One way or another she would force the truth out of him.

The room was filled with laughter as Kai tried to return the favor. Without Empower his shorter arms weren’t a match for her. He ended up falling out of the bed to escape her grasp.

“I’ll tell you. I’ll tell you,” he raised his hands in surrender and dried the tears at the corners of his eyes.

Kai didn’t hold back much apart from the skills since he didn’t understand them entirely yet.

“I knew you were blessed by the spirits, but this...” Ele looked at him up and down, like she expected to see a halo or a tail.

If you only knew the other options...

Kai made her promise not to tell their mother or Moui yet. They also agreed that Kea absolutely couldn’t find out.

The main requirement to unlock the Second Seal early was danger, lots and lots of it. Neither of them dared imagine what Kea might do if she found out. She was only one year from gaining her profession, but that might not matter if she discovered he had gained one before her.

Kai politely pushed Ele out of the door. He thought she would never stop asking questions. Finally, he was blessedly alone once more.

He had considered telling her about his plan to discard his profession. Maybe getting it all out in one go was better, though he'd never get to testing Mana Child if they started that argument. There wasn't anything to be done now that he had broken the Second Seal, but they were still in time to change his mind on *that*.

It would be an uphill battle to convince them there was a *mostly* safe way to do it, as long as he didn't level Mana Child too high and made the proper preparations. Unsurprisingly, there was a solution to everything if you paid and knew the right people.

Still two and a half years, no need to hurry. Future Kai will be happy to deal with it.

Future him was always more patient and resourceful than *Present him*. Worst case scenario he could delegate the task to *Future-Future him*. A completely foolproof plan in his humble opinion.

Time to unwrap my presents.

Sitting cross-legged on his bed, Kai examined his mana network and reserves. The glowing pathways had doubled, he was sure most red professions weren't so complicated.

Well, not everyone is me. Maybe Ele is right, I'm getting a big head.

Stopping his mind from wandering on tangents, Kai focused on his body. He had gained an intuitive understanding of his reserves through countless uses and training, now Mana Spring and his profession channels had thrown that sense out the window.

Boons were passive boosts. While they didn't level like skills, they could grant priceless advantages like an intuitive understanding of a weapon, an improved affinity for an element, or, in his case, of his mana pool.

The concentration of essence in his body had not diminished, if anything it was a hair higher. He was glowing like a human-sized lamp. When Kai absorbed more motes of mana, he lost as many as he gained.

This must be my new limit. The question is how much higher is it?

His first idea was to cast a water spell, though his mother made him promise not to cast magic inside the house. Opting for a more unassuming route, Kai expelled an orb of mana in his hands to create a training construct. It was one of the largest designs Dora had taught him to train Mana Manipulation.

Wasting no time shaping the mana, Kai simply let the sphere orbit around him. He had practiced with it enough times to instinctively know how much mana it required. He could make about twelve attempts before he reached his limits.

It wasn't the most scientific method, but it would give him a rough estimate of the boost from Mana Spring. One by one, spheres of mana were expelled from his body, joining an increasingly busy orbital space. After fifteen Kai was forced to fuse them together to maintain them.

After twenty-four, Kai just let the new ones dissipate. It would be a pain to refill his reserves, but he couldn't bring himself to care right now.

I've doubled my mana.

He knew the increase was significant, but he hadn't dared believe it. Now the proof was before his eyes. His body could now contain two times the essence it stored before. And that wasn't even the best part.

Humans needed roughly half their mana before they began to suffer side effects, but the boost from Mana Spring was added on top of that. He didn't need to spare a part to survive.

Kai had expelled a total of thirty-six orbs. His body only needed a quarter of his reserves, and the mana he could use had effectively tripled. It felt like the last twelve Christmases had come all at once.

And I've got two more skills to go.